

Certainty As A Condition Of Possibility For All Conditions Of Possibility

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Abstract

This article defends the thesis that intrinsic phenomenological certainty constitutes the ultimate condition of possibility for all phenomenality, including the very structure of internal time consciousness described by Husserl (2012, 2019). It argues that temporal experience—characterized by retention, impression, and protension—cannot be founded simply on a flow¹ devoid of prior identity, symmetry, and stability. Rather, the very possibility of flow, succession, and duration presupposes absolute formal singularities², understood here as expressions of original certainty. Based on the theory of the informational singularity of self-consciousness (ISS), this article proposes a phenomenology of certainty that is more fundamental and general than Husserl's phenomenology of time, capable of explaining not only how experience is articulated temporally, but also why something can appear as experience in the first place. The article thus argues that every relative (temporal, relational, negative) condition of possibility depends on absolute (intrinsic, affirmative, non-contrastive) conditions of possibility, reformulating classical notions of identity, intentionality, self-awareness, and their phenomenological foundations.

Keywords: Phenomenology; Certainty; Time consciousness; Identity; Informational Singularity of Self-Awareness

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1 INTRODUCTION

Husserl's phenomenology of the inner consciousness of time occupies a central place in 20th-century philosophy. For Husserl, the tripartite structure composed of primordial impression, retention, and protension constitutes the minimum condition for something to appear as something in conscious experience (HUSSERL, 2012). Without retention, there would be no identity; without identity, there would be no continuity; and without continuity, there would be no meaning.

This article does not deny this analysis, but argues that it is not sufficiently fundamental. It is argued that the very possibility of the temporal structure described by Husserl presupposes a more basic phenomenological level: the level of intrinsic and absolute³ certainty. It is thus argued that certainty⁴ is not a product of temporality, but its condition of possibility.

2 THE TRIPARTITE STRUCTURE OF TIME IN HUSSERL

According to Husserl, all conscious experience presents a minimal structure composed of:

- Primordial Impression (Urimpression): the lived now;
- Retention: the now that has just passed and remains present;
- Protension: the immediate anticipation of what is to come.

This structure is presented as irreducible⁵ (KELLY, 2025) and as the ultimate foundation of phenomenology. At the end of the phenomenological reduction process—natural world, objects, intentional acts, empirical self, and transcendental self—what remains is the absolute flow of temporal consciousness, which cannot be objectified, thematized, or explained logically and

¹ If the very structure of the flow were not “given” (certain), constituted, established, determined, stabilized, fixed, and maintained (retained), based on elements that precede (logically and structurally) the flow itself, there could be neither (without underlying identities) a flow of experiences, nor the experience of flow; there would be neither a succession of experiences, nor the experience of succession.

² See Jaued (2025).

³ This is a non-contrastive, a-dual, reflexive level of consciousness, without negation, without difference, without otherness, and without diversity (LIU, 2022; MCINERNEY, 1988).

⁴ The experience of certainty is a product of temporality, but the certainty of experience constitutes a basic prerequisite for the structure itself at all its levels. The very structure that composes temporality in Husserl demands an intrinsic identity. If the very structure that orders and articulates temporality, and each of its elements—primordial impression, retention, and protension—were not fixed, stable, prior, and “given,” there would be no possibility of a representation of the experience of succession. The structural elements of the temporal flow appear as they are, each with its own identity, because of the intrinsic, reflexive certainty that constitutes, fixes, stabilizes, and maintains them.

⁵ That is, as the minimal structure through which conscious experience is articulated, which is the temporal structure itself, not allowing any form of further reduction.

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phenomenologically. In the sense that there is no other underlying structure.

For this reason, Husserl identifies the internal consciousness of time as the “zero point” of phenomenology.

3 THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF AN ABSOLUTE FLOW OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Against this position, it is argued here that there is no absolute flow⁶ of consciousness. A flow understood as pure transformation, without identity, without symmetry, and without stability, cannot appear as a phenomenon. There is no experience of temporal flow without the certainty of the experience that precedes and enables the flow itself. If the internal consciousness of time means the experience of a temporal flow, before it (logically and phenomenologically) there needs to be certainty of the experience, certainty of the phenomenological appearance in itself, and certainty of the elements that compose it.

The certainty of the appearance—that is, phenomenological certainty—applies equally to experience considered in its atomic form as well as to experience understood as extended in time. It therefore applies both to “innocent” models of phenomenological time, such as the Newtonian-inspired cinematic view⁷, which conceives of experience as a succession of punctual instants, and to more sophisticated conceptions centered on the experience of duration, continuity, retention, and protension, such as that developed by Husserl.

There is no succession without differentiation; there is no differentiation without criterion; there is no criterion without identity. Therefore, there is no flow without prior structures of fixation and certainty.

The experience of duration and succession presupposes that something remains identical while something changes. A flow completely devoid of identity could not even be recognized as a flow. The very notion of transformation would lose meaning for cognition and for the phenomenological structure.

Thus, temporal flow is not original. It is constituted from stable phenomenological units, which function as criteria for ordering, tracking, and comparison. These units are absolute in the phenomenological sense: they do not derive from contrast, negation, or relation, but from formal coincidence with themselves. This means

that they are reflexive identities that cannot be extracted from the flow itself, but are presupposed by it.

4 CERTAINTY AS AN ORIGINAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL STRUCTURE

The central thesis of this article is that these stable units correspond to forms of intrinsic certainty. This is an original certainty, not inferential, not contrastive, and not relational. It does not result from the exclusion of alternatives, nor from the negation of the possible, but from the reflexive coincidence of a state with itself.

This certainty is absolute because it does not admit phenomenological gradation. It constitutes the basis upon which any experience of uncertainty, negation, or contrast can appear in a derivative way. There is no phenomenological experience of uncertainty as such, but only the certainty of uncertainty.

The internal consciousness of time, as conceived by Husserl, describes the formal condition of possibility for the continuous bestowal of meaning, retention, protension, and constitution of the flow of experience. However, this temporal structure already presupposes something even more fundamental: fixation, minimal stability, self-identity that makes possible any retention, any continuity, and any recognition of the same throughout the flow. This deeper condition is precisely certainty, understood not as an epistemic judgment, but as an original phenomenological structure of identity and coincidence with itself.

In this sense, certainty⁸ is not only co-originating with time, but logically prior to it. The anteriority here is not temporal—for that would already presuppose what is at stake—but structural: certainty is the condition of possibility for the very constitution of phenomenological time. Without minimal identity, without internal coincidence, without reflexive symmetry, there is no retention, no duration, no flow. Phenomenological time is, therefore, a structural derivation of certainty, while certainty is the innermost dimension of phenomenological experience.

All the elements that make up the temporal structure that is articulated in the way determined by Husserl and others (such as the elements of the tripartite dimension, the temporal units, the dynamics of relations) need to possess an identity of their own, even if this identity is

⁶The idea of an “absolute flow” here aims to signify flow understood as the zero point of experience.

Flow as the ultimate element of phenomenological experience. The irreducible element that cannot be further analyzed in Husserl's sense.

⁷ Augustine's approach in Book XI of his *Confessions* exposed a rather suggestive position of a kinematic view of time. This is a view that can be considered presentism (as it would later be called), where only the present is real and consciousness is confined to it. Past and future do not exist in themselves, but

only as memory and anticipation. That is, what exists is the remembrance of the past in the present and the anticipation or expectation of the future also in the present. The three dimensions of time (past, present and future) exist in the “soul” (in the mind): the present of past things, the present of the present and the present of future things (GALE, 1968: 44).

⁸ Certainty, in this context, is understood as certainty of experience in its most basic form.

constituted relationally, it is presented in an absolute and intrinsic way.

Although, for Husserl, these dimensions (primordial impression, retention, and protension) are essentially relational, their manifestations as such require a non-relational basis: an intrinsic certainty of appearance. Without this, there would be no retention as retention, nor protension as protension, nor lived present as lived present.

This point reveals a structural limit of the phenomenology of time: it presupposes, without explicitly thematizing, a more fundamental phenomenology of certainty and identity. It is in this sense that the Phenomenology of Certainty/Information/Identity proves to be more general than Husserlian phenomenology. In this sense, certainty is logically, phenomenologically, and ontologically prior to temporality⁹.

5 THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF CERTAINTY AND THE “ZERO POINT” OF EXPERIENCE

For Husserl, phenomenological reduction progressively leads to what he understands as its “ultimate residue.” Husserlian phenomenology operates through a series of successive reductions: (1) the reduction of the natural world, (2) the reduction of physical objects as transcendental realities, (3) the reduction of intentional acts taken as relations with worldly objects, (4) the reduction of the empirical and psychological self, and (5) the reduction to the transcendental self. At the end of this process, something irreducible remains: the temporal flow of absolute consciousness.

This flow cannot be objectified, thematized as a thing, causally explained, nor reduced to something more fundamental. It constitutes the condition of possibility for any object, act, or identity to appear. For this reason, Husserl considers the internal consciousness of time as the “zero point” of phenomenology—the level at which every process of reduction finds its limit and its ultimate basis.

The Phenomenology of Certainty, however, can be presented as even more fundamental, more basic, and more general than the phenomenology of the internal consciousness of time. Its primacy is not merely hierarchical, but structural: it is a level of description that is logically more basic, phenomenologically more internal, and ontologically more radical. While the phenomenology of time describes how experience is articulated—through retention, primordial impression, and protension—the phenomenology of certainty seeks to explain why something can appear as experience in the first place.

In this sense, the phenomenology of certainty not only provides an explanation of the “why,” but also a more elementary level of the “how.” It aims to clarify the intrinsic conditions that make the very consciousness of the flow possible, that is, the foundations that allow the tripartite structure of time to be given as a phenomenon.

Certainty, understood as intrinsic identity and reflexive coincidence, would be the condition of possibility of the very temporal structure described by Husserl.

From this follows the thesis that the task of reduction can be taken a step further. It is possible to conceive of a more fundamental level of consciousness than that reached by the analysis of the internal consciousness of time. Such a level does not negate the Husserlian description, but reinscribes it within a broader horizon, in which the temporal dimension ceases to be the ultimate foundation of phenomenality. Certainty then appears as a more original principle of phenomenological constitution.

This principle would allow for the expansion of the very concept of phenomenology, encompassing descriptions that would not make sense within the strictly Husserlian framework—for example, the hypothesis of atomic or timeless phenomena—provided that “phenomenon” is understood in the minimal sense of there being something that is as it is for a subject (or for an experiential state) to possess it. Under this expanded interpretation, the phenomenology of certainty presents itself as a condition of possibility for any conceivable form of phenomenality, including those that are not primarily structured according to the form of lived time. Although Husserl identifies temporal flow as the ultimate residue of phenomenological reduction, it is argued here that it is possible to advance a further degree in the reduction. The phenomenology of certainty operates at an even more basic level than the internal consciousness of time. The phenomenology of the internal consciousness of time explains how experience is articulated in retention, impression, and protension. The phenomenology of certainty explains why something can appear as experience in the first place. Certainty is, therefore, the condition of possibility of all conditions of possibility.

6 ABSOLUTE AND RELATIVE CONDITIONS OF POSSIBILITY

Temporality is a condition of relative possibility, as it involves contrast, differentiation, and relationship between moments. Every condition of relative possibility presupposes conditions of absolute possibility.

Examples of this principle include:

- Certainty as the basis of uncertainty;
- Unity as the basis of multiplicity;
- Affirmation as the basis of negation;
- Presence as the basis of absence;
- Being as the basis of non-being;
- Permanence as the basis of change;
- Life as the basis of death;
- Truth as the basis of falsehood.

The absolute is that which can be determined in itself. It is that which is intrinsic, free from any kind of relationship with any element external to itself. The

⁹ See “Certainty Before Time” (JAUED, 2026)

absolute is, therefore, that which is identical to itself, which rests upon itself. It is a form of determination that belongs to the thing given its own substance¹⁰, its own nature (or rather, its own nature). The relative can only be determined from a previously established absolute.

The (phenomenological) appearance is a manifestation of certainty and identity. To appear implies being. And being implies certainty. There is no appearance of the absolute non-appearance (of nothingness), because appearance is intrinsic, positive, affirmative, absolute, non-contrastive, identical to itself. The phenomenological dimension does not admit (in this sense) opposition in any way, because there is no negation, no contrast, no plurality, no diversity. There is no principle of non-contradiction, no principle of opposition, no principle of exclusion, no exclusion of possibilities, no elimination of alternatives, no elimination of uncertainty. What appears is, therefore, a dual and purely reflexive.

The “negative appearance,” the appearance without appearing (without possessing any phenomenological property whatsoever) is non-appearance. Or, in a Parmenidean way, it is not, it does not exist and cannot exist. To negate an absolute state is to eliminate its existence. The denial of the certainty of a state is equivalent to the impossibility of the state existing. A phenomenological state without certainty is not a phenomenological state. Certainty corresponds to symmetry, maximum organization and minimum entropy¹¹, minimum uncertainty (from the point of view of the body, the organism, which is the organic basis of the state).

Uncertainty, negation, the negative, the relative, etc., can only appear on the structure of certainty. The appearance of uncertainty and negation in themselves would be equivalent to the appearance of "non-being," which is logically contradictory. What appears, is. To appear is to be, and to be is certainty. The phenomenological dimension is a "field" of certainty; the manifestation itself is an expression of certainty. Whatever appears has to be in order to appear. There is no way to appear without being something. Appearance is a manifestation of certainty and identity. To appear implies being. And to be implies certainty. Existence and the quality of what exists are confused or fused into one thing.

From its own point of view, the state is only certainty. Imprinted in its intrinsic certainty is the fundamental meaning of all experience. This meaning is obtained through mirroring Karl Friston's (2006, 2010) Free Energy Principle (FEP) in consciousness, in the phenomenological dimension itself. The FEP provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how biological systems, especially the brain, function to maintain homeostasis and predictability by minimizing uncertainty. According to Friston,

The free energy principle claims that any self-organizing system that is in equilibrium with its environment needs to minimize free energy (FRISTON, 2010).

If we assume that consciousness is a characteristic of living organisms (which are self-organizing systems), we can say that its intrinsic meaning is derived, mirrored, imprinted, and transferred from matter to the structure of consciousness itself: the mark of resistance to disappearance inflicted by the tendency toward disorder is harmony, balance, symmetry, etc. Certainty is the (phenomenological) expression that determines the meaning of the principle that encompasses not only consciousness, but any and all organisms that self-organize to resist disorder, entropy.

From this fundamental point, the meaning derived from conscious experience is constructed. If it is assumed, as Karl Friston and Mark Solms do (FRISTON AND SOLMS, 2018), that consciousness plays, at its most fundamental level, the role of promoting changes in the organism's behavior that help maintain its homeostasis, then the quality of a phenomenological state represents some form of deviation of the organism's states from their ideal states. Thus, for example, the experience of hunger or thirst serves to alert the organism to the lack of elements that enable its survival.

These qualities can be thought of, according to the framework constructed here, as derived meanings.

7 IDENTITY AND INFORMATIONAL SINGULARITY OF SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS (ISS)

Husserl argues that the identity of the object, of meaning, and of the self derives from temporal retention. This work partially agrees¹², but distinguishes levels of identity.

The most fundamental identity—corresponding to the Informational Singularity of Self-Consciousness

¹⁰ The idea of “substance” here does not intend to establish an exegetical commitment to any specific tradition of this term, so abundantly explored in the History of Philosophy. The intended meaning aims only to highlight the independence of this phenomenological dimension from any external determination.

¹¹ See “ISS as a mirror of the Principle of Free Energy in consciousness”, Jaued (2026).

¹² The partial agreement stems from the fact that, at a specific (derived, more complex and

sophisticated) level of identity, the temporal structure is logically and structurally prior to identity (such as the level of personal identity where the character of identity is essentially given through the individual's development over time). However, identity at a more fundamental level (the original identity) is itself logically and structurally more fundamental than the temporal structure, even when both are co-original.

(ISS)—is not derived from time, but makes it possible. It is an intrinsic, purely reflexive, a-dual, non-contrastive, and non-negative identity.

At this level, the Principle of Non-Contradiction does not apply, as there is neither negation nor opposition. This identity does not exclude possibilities, does not affirm anything about the external world, and does not operate with truth conditions. It founds the individual as a singularity.

This is a purely reflexive identity, the foundation of the analytical certainty that everything is identical to itself—expressed by the principle of identity ($A = A$)—constituting the first foundation of any and all mental acts. Whether in the original form of certainty "I am I," or in the logical form "A is A," identity is the first anchor of perception, thought, and consciousness in general.

It is from this that:

- the principle of non-contradiction can be derived: $A \neq \text{not-}A$;
- any contrast becomes possible;
- every form of negation, differentiation, and exclusion emerges.

Every contrastive cognitive operation logically presupposes an analytical basis of recursive identity.

Without certainty of identity, there is no:

- negation,
- difference,
- exclusion,
- inference,
- nor even error.

Therefore, certainty is simultaneously:

- the structure of thought,
- the basis of knowledge,
- and the phenomenological purpose of cognitive activity.

At a derived level, with the introduction of negation, opposition, and extrinsic relation, identity governed by the Principle of Non-Contradiction emerges. It is at this level that some analytical propositions, exclusion of alternatives, and reference to the world arise.

8 INTENTIONALITY, SELF-AFFECTION, AND RECURSIVITY

The consciousness of time is not intentional in the classical sense, as it is not directed towards an object distinct from itself. It is self-manifestation, self-affection, and immediate experience.

The SIA provides a conceptual framework for understanding this non-classical intentionality: a pure recursivity in which form and content coincide. This recursivity simultaneously constitutes the subject and the phenomenon.

Unlike Kant (1998) and Husserl (2012, 2019), this form is not empty. It is the origin of maximum phenomenological informativeness, from which any content can emerge.

9 CONCLUSION

The phenomenology of certainty is more basic and more general than the phenomenology of the internal consciousness of time. It explains both the foundation of temporality and its possibility of manifestation.

Certainty, in philosophy and cognitive science, is typically considered an epistemic attitude toward propositions, synonymous with belief, justification, and truth, or it has a subjective meaning, such as a sense of confidence or security (NEUKART, 2025). In these frameworks, certainty is secondary, derived (or even trivial): it is not part of the structure of experience, but rather accompanies knowledge or cognition. The current paradigm, in turn, redefines certainty as a reflexive identity (order, structure, informational), a basic mode of constitution that underlies all phenomena of experience and cognition (ROSSI, 2025).

The idea of the Informational Singularity of Self-Consciousness (ISS) expresses the argument that self-awareness is based on a single fundamental informational structure (ROSSI, 2025). This is the most fundamental layer, defined by maximum certainty and reflexive identity, upon which all subsequent cognition, experience, and intentionality are based. At this level, self-awareness is not inferential, contrastive, or relational in the usual sense. Instead, it is reflexive, not dual: the self is in direct and unmediated coincidence with itself, and is a basic point of coherence and stability (SU, 2025).

Intrinsic certainty is not a psychological state, nor a belief, nor a product of inference. It is the original formal structure of phenomenality, the absolute zero point of experience. At this level, certainty is not an epistemic judgment, but rather an informational property: constituting an identity, it fixes the self, conferring coherence to experience over time.

Thus, the consciousness of time does not found certainty; it is certainty that founds time.

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